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L.A. District Attorney's Office Tackles Truancy in the Antelope Valley

Studies reveal that nine of 10 youths detained have a history of chronic truancy. Recognizing the link between truants and crime, the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office today tackled the issue at an all-day forum in one of the county's most affected areas.

District Attorney Jackie Lacey said early truancy prevention ultimately increases graduation rates and abates long-term criminal behavior.

"Keeping students in school is a community effort," District Attorney Lacey said. "Often, when students are not in school they are getting in trouble. I am pleased that through this forum we are marshaling resources to get children back into the classroom."

While many schools in the Antelope Valley are making strides in reaching parents and students to prevent truancy, some elementary schools in the area report truancy rates as high as 55 percent. California's Compulsory Education Law requires that every child ages 6 to 18 to attend school daily.

The Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office addresses chronic truancy via its Abolish Chronic Truancy (A.C.T.) program. Lydia Bodin, deputy-in-charge of A.C.T., said that while most believe truancy is a prevalent issue for high school students, chronic truancy often originates at the elementary school level.

Almost 40 percent of all truant students in California are elementary school children. A.C.T. helps students and parents get back on the right track.

As a last resort, parents who fail to send their children to school may be prosecuted. The maximum penalty is a fine of up to \$2,500 per child and up to one year in county jail. The forum's speakers included Bodin; Judge Geanene Yriarte of the Los Angeles County Superior Court; and Bureau Chief Paul Vinetz of the Los Angeles County Probation Department.

The “Tackling Truancy” training event, which took place at the Lancaster Learning Complex, drew about 150 educators, social service providers and law enforcement personnel.

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About the Los Angeles County District Attorney’s Office

Los Angeles County District Attorney Jackie Lacey leads the largest local prosecutorial office in the nation. Her staff of nearly 1,000 attorneys, 300 investigators and 800 support staff members is dedicated to seeking justice for victims of crime and enhancing public safety. Annually, the [Los Angeles County District Attorney’s Office](#) prosecutes more than 60,000 felonies and 140,000 misdemeanor crimes.